



In this file photo, a Christmas tree and skyscrapers illuminated for the New Year celebrations are seen in downtown Grozny, the capital of Chechnya, Russia. — AP

CARNEGIE DELI, A NEW YORK INSTITUTION, CLOSES ITS DOORS

'A well-known name and nostalgic food aren't enough to keep a place going'

For 79 years it reigned as a New York culinary institution: the Carnegie Deli, frequented by locals and visitors for its sandwiches, and immortalized in the Woody Allen movie "Broadway Danny Rose." Now, it's closed, relegated to nostalgic photos and memories—another sign, many say, that America's biggest city is losing its old charms and succumbing to exorbitant property prices and the encroachment of ever more Manhattan hotels. On its last day, Friday, dozens braved the cold to line up at the 7th Avenue eatery across the street from the famed Carnegie Hall, close to Central Park.

They were determined to get one last bite in the most emblematic of New York's Jewish delicatessens, a place whose walls boast hundreds of old photos of theater stars from nearby Broadway. Paul Zatek, a young finance executive, was representative of many now living in what is one of the world's most expensive cities. "I've lived here for 10 years and had never come," he said. But the realization that it was the last chance to taste the

deli's enormous, \$30 pastrami sandwich—called the "Woody Allen," in honor of the director/actor who gave the place much of its cachet—prompted him to drop by and wait for a seat.

'Incredibly difficult decision'

"It's just a New York institution—you see from the pictures on the walls how many people have come here," said his fiancée, Jackie Fennessey, looking around at the walls. The owner of the establishment, Marian Harper, said it had been a very difficult decision to close the deli, which she inherited from her father, who had bought it with a partner in 1976. "I'm at that certain age where I want to enjoy my life," Harper told public radio network NPR. "And all good things must come to an end." According to the New York Daily News, Harper rejected an offer from one of her former employees, a dishwasher who now owns a Mexican restaurant, to buy the restaurant for \$10 million.

He had hoped to preserve the address, which he considered as "much a part of New York City as the Statue of Liberty and the Empire State Building." But its business—and management—had gone through some rough patches, including a messy divorce for Harper, a nearly year-long closure because of a reported gas leak, and a court ordering the deli to pay workers \$2.6 million in back wages. Harper said none of those snags factored into her decision to close.

'Cities change'

Forbes magazine portrayed the deli's end-of-an-era as part of the greater change of New York's makeup. "A well-known name and nostalgic food aren't enough to keep a place going on forever, even with tourists as a customer base. As cities change, the restaurants that reflect their character have to change, too," it said. For one of the waiters, Ali Tarique, it was sad to see the place he had worked in the past 14 years shut its doors.

"Every day you met new people, sometimes funny people, sometimes celebrities...very nice people," he reminisced as he tended to the final-day rush.

At one table, two young Chinese women, students at the University of California, Santa Barbara, admitted they had never heard of Carnegie Deli until just hours earlier. But now inside, waiting to be served, they marveled that a place so cozy could close down. "The feeling is so good, it feels so warm," said one of them, Ann Zheng. But while the deli no longer exists, aficionados of its pastrami and almost-as-renowned cheesecake need not go hungry. Harper says she intends to keep producing them in her New Jersey factory, supplying Carnegie Deli-branded eateries that are operating in Madison Square Garden, Las Vegas, and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. — AFP



People line up to get into the Carnegie Deli in New York. — AFP photos



New Yorker Paul Zatek (L) waits to take his first bite of a Woody Allen pastrami sandwich at the Carnegie Deli in New York.